

17. Marquinhos

Club: Paris Saint Germain

Date of Birth: 14 May 1994

Position: Defender

2013 was a year in which 'barely-an-adult' centre-back Marquinhos achieved many personal, football firsts. He won his first international cap for Brazil, putting to bed the debate of which senior international setup he would align with, Portugal or the Seleção Brasileira. Luis Filipe Scolari convinced Marquinhos to join the latter and he earned his first call up in late October 2013.

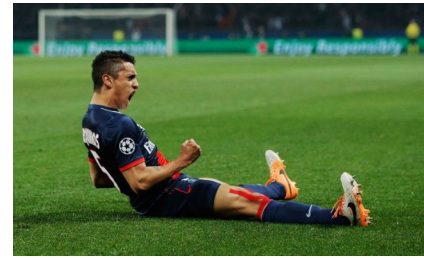
The next outstanding event that occurred for the 19 year old was his big-money summer move to Qatari-owned giants of French football, Paris Saint Germain. This deal was done for a staggering 35 million euros, a fee that is testament to the Brazilian's dazzling rise through the ranks of European football, having joined AS Roma just twelve months earlier for ten times less that amount (€3m) from Brazilian leviathans Corinthians.

One can therefore assume that the teenager must have something special about him, with many touting Marquinhos to become the next Thiago Silva. If that is indeed the case, then PSG have done some pretty spectacular business in terms of Brazilian central defenders in the past 2 seasons.

Marquinhos' style of play very much typifies that of the modern central defender. A player built to deal with every situation; Marquinhos possesses great technical ability with the ball at his feet, which enables him to calmly diffuse what would otherwise appear to be chaotic defensive situations. This is highlighted by the 88.9% pass completion rate that he amassed during the 2012-2013 season in Serie A with the Italian capital club.

The Brazilian's approach to defending is not to use power and strength to dispossess attackers but instead to assess the run of play and to make intelligent decisions by understanding where the ball is going to be played next. As a result, his sliding challenges are almost always clean and timed to perfection, meaning that the defender rarely commits fouls, because of the way in which he defends guarantees that he seldom comes into any contact at all with an opposing attacker.

While this furnishes his game with uniqueness, it also points at the current failings present in Marquinhos' game. At 6ft, he is neither the tallest nor one of Ligue 1's most imposing centre-backs and likely struggles in training when faced with the aerial challenge that a player like Zlatan Ibrahimovic poses him.



Marquinhos has played just nine Ligue 1 matches in 2013 and has admittedly struggled to break the centre back pairing of Alex and Thiago Silva, especially because of how personally close the two more experienced Brazilian centre backs have become in recent months, with the former rumoured to be insisting to the PSG board that they extend the ex-Chelsea man's contract which is set to expire at the end of the season. Marquinhos has therefore played about half of his games filling in at the heart of the defence and the other half at right-back when Gregory van der Wiel was out of action in November/December time.

In both positions, he has quietly excelled, but the lack of consistency in terms of game time has made it problematic for him in terms of producing a string of notable performances together.

The player's pace and athleticism allows him to cut out danger when defending but also to create problems for the opposition from attacking set pieces. Although his often-wayward heading is not advantageous, his ability to react first in a penalty area scramble is. This is incidentally how he was able to score his first ever Ligue 1 goal in September 2013 against Toulouse. With his initial effort being blocked, Marquinhos reacted first to Toulouse goalkeeper Ali Ahamada's stop to force the ball into the back of the net.

Marquinhos has also produced several sparkling Champions League performances, playing a part in every group game, but most poignantly against Benfica, when an injury to Thiago Silva allowed his compatriot protégé the chance to perform impressively and with poise as PSG eased to a 3-0 victory. A reason for this is most likely the less physical nature of the Champions League compared to Ligue 1 and this suits Marquinhos game style better.

With the aforementioned accomplishments in mind, it is difficult to fathom that this central defensive starlet is just 19 years old and with his whole career ahead of him. PSG and Brazil are fortunate to have arguably the most talented young centre back on the planet representing them.

'With PSG, what is happening is magical.'
Marquinhos

14th October 2013

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